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Yes	The Campaign for a UN Parliamentary Assembly

First name:	Last name:
Democracy	Without Borders

Global catastrophic risks mitigated	Risk multipliers managed	Implementation timeframe
Climate change	Conflict or political violence	Medium
Eco-system collapse	Institutions that lack inclusivity or accountability	
Pandemics and anti-microbial resistance	Poverty and inequality	
The threat from new and emerging technology		
Unknown risks		
Weapons of Mass Destruction		

United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA)

Create a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA), giving “we the peoples” a voice. The UNPA proposal represents a mature, comprehensive and widely supported route to more effective, democratic and accountable global governance.

DETAILS

The UNPA proposal represents a mature, comprehensive and widely supported route to more effective, democratic and accountable global governance. This is in line with Together First’s intention to “prioritise ideas that have already generated considerable political will and could be implemented relatively quickly.” For those unfamiliar with the UNPA proposal, there is an FAQ online here:

<https://en.unpacampaign.org/proposal/faq/>

For convenience, we quote a summary available at

<https://en.unpacampaign.org/proposal/>:

“In this age of globalization, more and more issues have a global dimension that requires global cooperation. At the UN and other international fora, governments come together to negotiate and decide on policies that affect us all.

The UN Charter begins on the promising opening words: “We the peoples.” However, one will seek in vain for any clause in the document that specifies a means by which ordinary people can play a role in the organization’s deliberations and decision-making.

The bodies of the UN and international organizations are occupied by officials who are appointed by the executive branches of national governments. In view of the growing importance of international organizations and their decisions, this is no longer sufficient.

A United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA) for the first time would give popularly elected representatives a formal role in global affairs. As an additional body, the assembly will directly represent the world’s citizens and not governments.

Initially, states could choose whether their UNPA members would come from national parliaments, reflecting their political spectrum and gender equality, or whether they would be directly elected. Eventually, the goal is to have all members directly elected.

Starting as a largely consultative body, the rights and powers of the UNPA could be expanded over time as its democratic legitimacy increases. The assembly will act as an independent watchdog in the UN system and as a

democratic reflection of the diversity of world public opinion.

In the long run, once its members are all democratically elected, the assembly could be developed into a world parliament which – under certain conditions and in conjunction with the UN General Assembly – may be able to adopt universally binding regulations.

In short, the UN should evolve from what many believe to be a generally ineffectual “talk-shop” into a viable democratic and legislative body.”

The allocation of seats in a UNPA would initially need to be based on the principle of degressive proportionality (like the European Parliament). This means that the citizens of small countries would be relatively better represented per capita than those from large countries.

A technical concern is whether the Inter-Parliamentary Union doesn't already perform the function of a UNPA. The short answer is “no”. The long answer is provided in this recent paper:

<https://en.unpacampaign.org/publications/the-case-for-a-un-parliamentary-assembly-and-the-inter-parliamentary-union/>

In summary, UNPA and IPU are complementary institutions with different functions. UNPA is a proto World Parliament, IPU provides liaison to national parliaments.

A proposal for reform of the UN does not get support from over 1600 current and former parliamentarians globally, and a former UN Secretary-General, without having robust answers to a very wide range of objections.

Evaluating the UNPA proposal against the various criteria set by Together First

Together First “What we're looking for”

As mentioned above, UNPA has “already generated considerable political will and could be implemented relatively quickly.” The focus of this submission has not been on the idea, but the practical implementation.

Together First may object that UNPA is simply changing the “shape of the cup”:

<https://together1st.org/together-first-explained/>

But this is not an accurate analogy for UNPA. Currently global politics is based on competition between nominally sovereign nation-states, which is precisely why we face so many global crises. The solution is to initiate a process of supranational global integration. A UNPA is the first step, which would then help drive the process forward.

Together First Values

You cannot get more “inclusive, open and fair” than creating a parliament at the UN.

“How to save the world”

1. “Solutions don't mirror risks” – indeed, which is why this submission does not follow the given structure of Q2.

2. "...scope...must extend beyond UN system" – although starting as a UN body, a UNPA will address the performance of the overall system of global governance.
3. "...build upon...existing roadmaps" – see Q1 on SDGs.
4. "prevention-based approach" – see last part of Q2, a resilient 'on alert' system.
5. "risk multipliers" – see Q3 on poverty and inequality.
6. "resilience" – see last part of Q2, a resilient 'on alert' system.
7. "Nomenclature" – work in progress.
8. "Credibility" – the UNPA proposal has been endorsed by scores of former UN officials, academic experts, politicians and others.
9. "varied responses" – this is what parliaments do.
10. "Political will' is not a fixed constant" – the UNPA campaign has widespread support and strong momentum. The other factor shifting the 'Overton window' of acceptable political discourse is the looming climate and sustainability crisis.

Conclusion

The UNPA proposal meets all the criteria set by Together First. It represents a realistic, well-defined, comprehensive, and widely supported route to more effective, democratic and accountable global governance that will help address global catastrophic risks.

WIDER IMPLICATIONS

Alleviating poverty and inequality

Current levels of global poverty and inequality do not serve the common interest of humanity. A UNPA is designed to serve the common interest of humanity. Therefore a UNPA would consider how to tackle poverty and inequality. It is not the goal of this proposal to prejudge how this might be done. Rather it is the goal of this proposal to put in place the institutional structure and align the incentives such that it is done. A UNPA would be made up of a wide spectrum of delegates, including those who have first-hand knowledge of areas afflicted by poverty and whose constituents are affected. Such direct experience will help ensure a focus on practical solutions.

Risk of converse effect?

A UNPA will be a body that deliberates on and recommends policy proposals and courses of action. It is not the goal to prejudge what these might be. The unintended consequences of implementing the policies and proposals of a UNPA cannot be anticipated, and of course there could be adverse effects. However, the UNPA proposal is based on the premise that the better a decision-making process is designed, the better the solutions are likely to be. In particular, measures need to be implemented to regulate lobbying and to prevent and fight corruption.

Enhancing inclusivity and accountability in national and global governance

The purpose of a UNPA is to enhance inclusivity and accountability at the global level. A key ingredient of inclusivity is protection of minority interests, and the UNPA addresses this specifically: minorities could elect delegates, some seats could be reserved for minorities, and committees could be established on minority affairs. Accountability would be enhanced by UNPA oversight of UN operations and global governance institutions.

A UNPA would also increase accountability at the national level in that global challenges would no longer be primarily a national responsibility, and nations could then fairly be held accountable for the remaining (national) challenges they face. Currently nations often deny accountability by blaming global forces outside their control, a key factor undermining confidence in democracies globally.

A UNPA could also increase accountability at the national level by promoting democracy through the power of example, as has been seen in Europe.

Risk of converse effect?

In a first step, which is presented here, a largely consultative UN Parliamentary Assembly does not carry the risk of reducing inclusivity and accountability in national and global governance.

Reducing conflict and political violence

A UNPA would give a voice to elected representatives of the people of the world, who will consider solutions not from a national or geopolitical point of view, but from a transnational and global perspective based on shared values and political ideologies. A UNPA is a forum that will include a wide political spectrum, including minorities and opposition, thus potentially bringing together different parties in ongoing conflicts. In addition, members of a UNPA will be able to express their opinions and propose solutions without the need of considering the position of their home government and the potential impact on its international relations. Thus, a UNPA may provide a global platform for talks and exchange, and to identify and help build the popular and political will necessary to implement solutions that overcome previous deadlocks.

Risk of converse effect?

A UNPA will bring together a wide spectrum of delegates, including those who represent different parties in a given conflict, and that have conflicting world views and ideologies. Their discussions in a UNPA may be controversial and provide extreme voices a global platform that could incite popular rage and potentially violence. A UNPA human rights committee may openly address gross human rights violations in certain countries and condemn governments for their action or inaction, thus potentially provoking backlash from those concerned.

THEORY OF CHANGE

Implementation strategy

The campaign for the creation of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly has been running for over a decade, and in that time has attracted widespread support (see below for details). The implementation strategy has been developed over that time, is making good progress, and remains the focus of the campaign.

1. Generate support amongst politicians, parliaments, academics, opinion leaders, NGOs and the public – this is well underway.
2. Form a supportive Parliamentary Group for a UNPA – initiated in November 2018.
3. Find at least two countries (one from the global North and one from the South) to form the hub of a UNPA ‘group of friends’ at the UN – work in progress.
4. With support from the ‘group of friends’, the UN General Assembly could create an advisory UN Parliamentary Assembly as a ‘subsidiary organ’ under Article 22 of the Charter, on a simple majority vote, without the need for Charter Review.
5. As an intermediary step, the UN General Assembly could use the same mechanism to create an advisory UN Parliamentary Network that would look into the modalities of a full-fledged Parliamentary Assembly.

What if political will does not exist yet

The key obstacles are lack of popular and political will. These can be overcome by the looming sustainability crisis, and by reframing the concepts of identity and sovereignty.

The October 2018 IPCC Report made clear the urgency of effective action and the consequences of continued inaction. Already we are seeing movements such as the School Climate Strikes and Extinction Rebellion. Whilst governments fail to curb global carbon emissions, the environment will continue to deteriorate. There will come a point at which the damage is sufficiently severe and undeniable that it will catalyse political change.

A major factor defining identity and sovereignty in politics is a group of people facing a common problem. The common problem creates a shared identity, sovereignty lies with the group. This applies to a street trying to slow down passing traffic, and to a planet trying to reduce carbon emissions. There is no tension between national identity for national issues, and a global identity for global issues.

Realisation by implementing or making adjustments to current roadmaps

Implementing SDG16 would require the development of “effective, accountable and transparent institutions” at the global level. In other words, a UNPA. This is what SDG16 says:

SDG 16 Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Realisation by implementing or making adjustments to current roadmaps

SDG 16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

SDG 16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

SDG 16.8 Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance

Decision makers and implementers

The implementation strategy, including persuading decision-makers and implementers, is outlined above.

Since 2007, the international Campaign for a UNPA, coordinated by Democracy Without Borders, has been generating political support. Current supporters of the UNPA proposal include:

- The European, Pan-African and Latin American Parliaments
- Over 1600 current and former Members of Parliament
- 24 current and former heads of state or governments or foreign ministers
- Over 400 academics
- Over 400 NGOs
- 25 Nobel and Right Livelihood laureates
- Almost 7000 individual signatories from 161 countries
- Generating further support is the key goal of the ongoing UNPA campaign.

MITIGATING RISKS

Mitigating unknown risks

A UNPA by its nature would address all global catastrophic risks in an integrated way, reflecting the complex interrelationships between them. Together First are categorizing such integrated approaches under 'Unknown Risks'

Summary

The benefits of a UNPA in mitigating global catastrophic risks are:

1. Parliamentarians making decisions for the common good, rather than diplomats negotiating the lowest common denominator
2. Integrated problem solving
3. More effective and accountable global governance

Introductory comments

The UNPA proposal does not target any one risk, it provides a more effective, accountable and integrated process for tackling all global risks. A UNPA would help address these differing risks in a similar way, so with permission from Together First, the response here will not follow the given risk-by-risk structure. Instead the response will explain the

benefits of a UNPA in tackling all global risks.

The proposal for the creation of an advisory UNPA in the medium term is viewed as a first step towards the creation of a legislative world parliament in the longer term. The European Union and its European Parliament provide a useful model for the development of supranational governance. Whilst an advisory UNPA would provide a more effective decision-making process than the current approach, it would not have the enforcement powers, effectiveness and accountability of a fully-fledged world parliament. This is by design – supranational global integration should be done slowly and carefully. Climate change requires urgent action and cannot wait for the creation of a world parliament. Equally, however, reform of global governance cannot wait for climate change to be resolved. They need to be tackled in parallel.

Climate change

The climate crisis is a likely catalyst for the creation of a UNPA, and will be used to illustrate the benefits of a UNPA in managing all global problems.

Governments have known since the creation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 1988 that carbon emissions need to be reduced, yet more carbon has been emitted since then than in all previous history. How can this be?

It is not the science – the evidence is clear, the scientific consensus overwhelming.

It's not for lack of technology – the necessary solutions exist.

It's not the economics – the sooner action is taken, the cheaper it will be.

It is the politics – the economy has globalised, the impact on the environment has globalised, but politics remains national.

A conference between 200 competing governments, each acting in their own narrow national self-interest, is a recipe for delivering lowest common denominator solutions that are far from optimal for the world as a whole. This is why the Paris Climate Agreement has no teeth and carbon emissions continue to rise.

People solve common problems by choosing representatives to talk to each other to arrive at fair solutions. This is how it has always been done – from elders in a tribe, to citizens of ancient Athens, and parliamentarians today, worldwide and at every level of governance – except the global level.

A common objection

It has been argued that the current UN General Assembly already provides a forum for representatives of the people of the world to decide on fair solutions to global problems. Country ambassadors are chosen by their governments, and governments are (to a greater or lesser extent) answerable to their people.

The British Member of Parliament Edmund Burke made this elegant distinction between a congress of ambassadors and a parliament in 1774:

“Parliament is not a congress of ambassadors from different and hostile interests, which interests each must maintain, as an agent and advocate, against other agents and advocates; but parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole; where, not local purposes, not local prejudices ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole.”

A congress of ambassadors arrives at lowest common denominator solutions, parliaments instead are guided by the general good, and the outcomes can be very different. In addition, the UN General Assembly only includes representatives of the Executive branch of member states whereas a UNPA would include members of the opposition as well.

This is why we need a UNPA, a place for representatives of the people of the world to talk, and decide on fair solutions to global problems in the best interests of the people as a whole.

To be effective the decisions of such a parliament must be enforced, and to be legitimate such enforcement must be with the consent of the people. Over time a UNPA should evolve into an effective and accountable World Parliament.

Wider benefits of a UNPA in managing global problems

A UNPA would not tackle each global risk separately. As a parliament it would consider them all together. Risks such as climate change and eco-system collapse are inherently linked, but all global risks are linked in that decisions have to be made as to how to allocate the budget between them. A UNPA would provide a legitimate process for integrated decision making and help overcome the fragmentation of today's global governance.

Longer term, a federal world order should ensure lasting peace and effective collective security. There would be no need for weapons of mass destruction, no military, only police forces. The resulting peace dividend could be put to more constructive use.

Unknown risks

Current global governance arrives at fragmented lowest common denominator solutions, whereas a UNPA would take an integrated approach and act for the common good. A resilient 'on alert' multilateral system is a prime example of being for the common good, but not a lowest common denominator solution. Which is why a UNPA would deliver a resilient 'on alert' multilateral system whereas UN bodies such as the UN General Assembly do not. In addition, the UNPA would be able to put issues on the agenda that do not get sufficient attention in intergovernmental bodies.